

Dan Coyle: The Craft Of Being A Good Coach

Welcome to PCA's One on One Positive Coaching Alliance's podcast series where we talk with leading experts about how to develop Better Athletes, Better People through sports. And now here's your host: Jim Thompson, PCA Founder and CEO.

00:15 – JIM: I'm really excited today to be interviewing Dan Coyle. Dan was born in Saint Louis but raised in Alaska. He's been a journalist, now living in Cleveland. I have to ask you, Dan, are you a Cleveland Indians fan?

00:30 – DAN: You know...by marriage – does that count? I think it does! I think it does count, yes.

00:37 – JIM: He's been a youth baseball coach. Wrote the fantastic book "Hardball: A Season in the Projects" -Cabrini-Green in Chicago which was later turned into a movie with Keanu Reeves. Also wrote a book that I just found about and I'm going to be reading soon called "Waking Samuel." He followed Lance Armstrong for a long period of time before Lance was uncovered as a cheater so we may talk about that as well. Contributing Editor to *Outside* magazine; has won *Sporting News* Book of the Year Award, twice nominated for National Magazine awards and has been featured in the *Best American Sports Writing*. And, I'm just really proud to say – oh I haven't even mentioned his most popular books, which are "The Talent Code" and "The Little Book of Talent!" I'm just really proud to say that Dan is the newest member of Positive Coaching Alliance's National Advisory Board. Dan Coyle, welcome to PCA One-on-One.

01:44- DAN: Wow. It's really fun to be here with you and it's an honor to be a part of your mission.

01:49 – JIM: Let me start with "Hardball." You did all the research and wrote "Talent Code" and "The Little Book of Talent" quite a few years after you were coaching little league. What are some things that you learned in writing those books that you wish you had applied as a baseball coach or maybe...

02:11 – DAN: Everything. There were so many things that I looked back on and it really speaks to how coaches are, the role of coaches and how people become coaches in America which is different than other countries in some ways. It's usually, what happened to me in Chicago was I had a friend who said, "There's a league starting you should come." And I love baseball and that was my main qualification: I love baseball and I wasn't married and I had time. So I went down and I started coaching and there wasn't any test and there wasn't any curriculum. Somebody handed me a schedule and a bunch of kids came up and looked at me and I had to tell them stuff. I had to come up with something to say, and I had to come up with some drills. I stumbled through it along with my friends for several years there. It was only later, after I spent some years visiting talent hotbeds and studying the craft of coaching and studying how skill and talent really grow around the world, that I realized just how spectacularly amateurish and bad a coach I was. It was incredibly humbling to look back and say that I was going

through it really guessing and really hoping...really hoping that my good sense of humor and a few good ideas would carry the day. That sounds pretty good, but that's not what good coaching is made of. When you're looking to build skills and you're looking to connect human beings to a team, into a team, that is much more an art and a science than it is luck. We were lucky enough in Cabrini that we won a few games and a championship, even, but if I were to go back now with everything I know I think I would do it a little bit differently and, hopefully, a little bit better.

04:00 – JIM: You talk about, in “The Talent Code,” hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are swinging a baseball bat, practical in the world things. You want to hone those until they're automatic – talk about muscle-memory, etc. But, then you talk about soft skills like the ability to, as a little league manager, to look out and see – I think what, I was a basketball coach, and, “What is the other team doing here? What are they trying to do?” Soft skills... can you talk a little bit about the coach's role with the hard skills and the soft skills?

04:43 – DAN: Yeah. A coach is really doing a lot. Anybody who coaches knows what that feels like: to, sort of, be a little bit overwhelmed and not really understand what's going on out there. One-way, one tool you can have is to divide things up into those two buckets that you mentioned: the hard skill and the soft skill. A hard skill you want to do the same every time. It's a circuit in your brain, really. We talk about muscle memory but muscles don't really have memory, all of that is the electricity in our brain; the wires in our brain connecting up in a certain way that let us swing the golf club, swing the tennis racket exactly the same every time. That's what a hard skill is and they're built sort of like carpentry. They're built by doing things slowly, by paying keen attention to errors, by focusing a lot on the first reps and getting those right. They're built like a careful carpenter would build a house: piece-by-piece by piece; chunk-by-chunk would be the scientific term. And, then, in the other bucket you've got these soft skills, which are basically pattern recognition and reaction. When you think of Leo Messi going down the field in soccer, inventing moves as he goes down the field; when you think of a great coach seeing a pattern and reacting to it by putting in just the right play at just the right time: that's not magic. It looks like magic but what it is, is a soft skill that you grow over time. Those skills are not built piece by piece by piece; they're built in an atmosphere that's a little bit more exploratory, a little bit more like a skateboard park. If hard skills are built in a carpentry shed—a carpentry shop – then soft skills are built in a skateboard park where you're experimenting—you're *playing*, you're playing around with the sport, with the ball or with your coach skills. You're stretching in ways; you're falling on your face like you do with a skateboard. In both the hard and the soft, the main big realization that science has to teach us, the big headline that I think people like fellow Advisory Board member Carol Dweck and other folks that you know, they really are keen on showing us the fact that those mistakes which feel so bad, whether they're in the hard area or they're in the soft area, those mistakes are really our friends. Those are our teachers. Those are the points on the map that show us where to go. As a coach we can tune into that giant fact, that that mistake that that kid just made, or that mistake that you just made as a coach is actually showing you – it's a sign post! It's going to show you where to go and to take that not as a verdict on anyone's ability or

worth, but to take that as a piece of information very seriously that you can learn from. In the book, “The Talent Code,” I call this, the state, “deep practice.” It’s different than regular learning. It feels different; it feels...it’s harder. It’s more effortful. It can also be called “deliberate practice” but it’s that space on that edge of your ability where you’re making mistakes, *feeling* those mistakes and fixing those mistakes. That’s what talent is made of.

07:40 – JIM: You have this great analogy there “deep practice is like being a staggering baby.” I’ve got a five year old grandson and now a two-month old granddaughter, so Raffi is past the...you know he’s running all over the place, and Laila isn’t ready to walk yet. But I remember his – I happened to be there, they were living in Brooklyn at the time, I happened to be there when he took his first step – that idea of being a staggering baby and you say, “to get good, it’s helpful to be willing even enthusiastic about being bad.” I got this from George Leonard’s book –now I’m forgetting the name – but George Leonard... **[DAN: “Master.”]** Yes, thank you for “Mastery.” He talks about being “willing to play the fool” and it seems like when you—if you’re afraid of looking foolish, if you’re afraid of looking stupid, boy! You’re just not going to be a very good learner.

08:45 – DAN: You’re done. When Wayne Gretzky’s teammates watched him practice, they would occasionally see him slip and fall. He would be out there skating by himself, on the ice, by himself practicing these turns and moves and he’d slip and fall. Now, that is the greatest hockey player who’s ever laced up skates and he’s at the professional level and he’s in front of his teammates willing to take the emotional burn, the shame, of slipping and falling because that’s a guy who understands the only place he’s going to get better is on the edge of his ability. And his willingness to go to that place – psychologists call it “the sweet spot” which is funny, it doesn’t feel sweet to fall. It doesn’t feel sweet to stagger. But, that sweetness is because you learn so much if you genuinely engage in that moment and if you really feel what happens and you fix what happens.

09:32 – JIM: You know, a couple of thoughts there. You have a great term—it should actually be called the “bittersweet spot.” We have a lot of sports psychology folks including Charlie Maher who’s with the Indians in Cleveland. The crucial-ness of self-talk...when you’re doing something and you’re looking stupid that negative self-talk kicks in and you’ve got to be able to have a story to tell yourself about why, “Yeah, I’m looking foolish. I’m looking stupid here, but this is going to help me learn.”

10:08 – DAN: That’s right. That’s right. To actually have that growth mindset where you understand—and we have that in other places of our lives. We go to the gym and we try to lift a weight that’s really heavy and our muscles burn and we feel that burn, we translate that burn as a positive because we’ve heard, “feel the burn,” you know, “no pain, no gain.” We understand that with our muscles. But where it really becomes interesting is when you apply it to your skills, to your mind. When you understand that, that moment of feeling like an idiot is actually this tremendous good burn that you’re feeling that’s painful, but also incredibly productive. And, if you don’t go there, you’re not going to build the kind of circuitry that skill is made of. You’re not going to get faster,

better, more strong, accurate – it's impossible to go there. It's all about, kind of, re-interpreting that story – reinterpreting that self-talk. It's not about taking mistakes lightly. You still take them seriously you just don't take them personally. You don't take them as a verdict. As a coach if you can reinterpret and tell that story, that's the great challenge of coaching, I think, in some ways. We're constantly asking kids to go to that place where there's a lot of –where it's hard. Where it's really hard to go there and make mistakes in front of people. To create an environment where it's not just okay to do that, but where it is *awesome* to do that...there's a Chinese guy I met who's coaching the Chinese diving team. The Chinese diving team has won – I think in the last Olympics they won 70% of the medals. There was a moment that he videotaped for me that I put on my blog a while back; it was of a guy trying a dive that had never been done before, it was like a four somersault off of the high-dive and the guy completely screwed it up. He landed in the water almost as a back belly flop and the people in the arena gave him a standing ovation—all of his teammates and the coaches. He actually screwed up the dive, but they'd created this culture of supporting that moment of saying "that's exactly what we want: is somebody who's gutsy enough to go out and try that and fail and then try it again because we know that's where we're going to get better."

12:20 – JIM: Wow. What a story. We talk about people being pack animals, we tend to think of ourselves as John Wayne or we do what we think is right, what we want to do. We tend to go along with the organization we're in, if we want to be part of that and part of what you need to do, as a coach, for example, is to create a culture – we need to create a different pack for ourselves. It seems like that diver had a pack that really went against the grain. Rather than saying, "Oh man. Dumbo!" ...I love that story, I also love what you said earlier about people needing to take mistakes seriously, but not personally. I think so many---we have something we call "mistake ritual" where you flush mistakes or you wipe them off, you brush them off – you just see how kids, the burden goes off their shoulders. They [sigh], they take a breath when you as a coach make it clear it's okay for them to make a mistake. Then they become more aggressive. Man. This is great stuff, Dan.

13:35 – DAN: It's so great because you can even flip it further where it's not just okay, it's actually outstanding! That's our player of the week. That's our guy who went there more often than anybody else and was willing to do that. I mean, it's fascinating – the power of a coach to establish that tone and sustain that tone. There are little signals that go a tremendously long way.

13:58 – JIM: Wow. We were talking earlier about "deep practice" and you mentioned skateboarding. My son – I actually wrote about this in my first book, "Positive Coaching" – my son gave up baseball between his 11 and 12-year-old year and I went into a deep depression. I saw a psychologist about it and he got into boards: skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding. You start the talent code with this story about Clarissa and what I came to call "the Clarissa Zone." I think it was a Witty Herman song, "Golden Wedding," she heard it and she liked it and she had like six minutes of practice that was exactly what we want kids to do. How do you get kids into...how do you get kids into— first of all, I guess, teaching them what deep practice is and then how to – use the term

ignition – how to motivate them? Let’s start with how do you teach kids what deep practice is and then we can talk about how you could actually motivate them to actually dive into it.

15:03 – DAN: Yeah, teaching kids what deep practice is, you know, there’s a lot of elements to it but ultimately we learn through experience and trying to design situations where your kids can go to that place and get better. Then let them start connecting the dots. You probably don’t do it just through words by telling them – that’ll help to build a story around it and to celebrate the failure and to design spaces where people can fail at the edge of their ability. You’re not designing spaces where people can thrash and guess and hope, or places where things are too easy. But you’re constantly trying to design spaces where people are functioning at the edges of their ability. An interesting way to approach that question of teaching what deep practice is, is to try to imagine – to ask the question, really, who the fastest learner is in the universe. For my money, the fastest learner in the universe is your kid; it’s a 12-year old kid on a skateboard. The rate of learning that goes on when a 12 year old, fired up kid is on a skateboard is unbelievable! They get better so fast! I mean if you could teach algebra the way these kids teach themselves to skate, it would be unbelievable. So, what’s that environment like? Picture a kid on a skateboard. It’s an unsteady environment. He’s constantly aware of where he’s going to fall or not and he doesn’t have a coach telling him he’s not – there’s no third party in there, the skateboard informs you where the edge is. And, you’re also, if you’re a skateboarder, you’re surrounded by other skateboarders. You’re in a swimming pool or a skate-park and you’re constantly looking at people doing what you want to do; your windshield is packed with images of your future self. In terms of designing an environment, to me that would be the epitome of a great environment. Picture a swimming pool with ten skateboarders in it and there’s a little kid there watching them and who’s trying stuff out for himself – that kid is in a position of tremendous leverage when it comes to making the most of every minute because he’s in a good environment, on the edge and he’s filled his windshield with images of his future self. That really gets to the...you know, the second part of your question, Jim, which is about ignition: how do you light somebody up to want to do what Clarissa did in the book? It’s incredibly – it’s still sort of mysterious. Nobody really knows what happens when somebody stares and all of a sudden says “that’s me.” It’s very deep in identity psychology, but, ultimately, as a coach what you can do is, sort of, you can’t really control the lightning bolt but you can see the clouds. You can fill the windshield; you can create environments where kids are surrounded by people that they might want to become someday. That’s what ignition is- it’s staring at somebody and saying “That’s me. I don’t just admire them, I want to be them. I want to be exactly like that person.” The irony of that in modern American sports is that we spend a great deal of time and energy separating kids by their ages. We spend a great deal of time, sort of, “All the 12 year olds come off the field and all the 13 year olds come on the field.” When, really, the most motivating, igniting thing you can do is take the nine-year olds and the 13-year olds and have them have a practice together. Have the 13 year olds teach the nine-year olds a few things. I saw that first-hand in Curaçao when I went to do some research for “The Talent Code.” They had a baseball practice with, like, 70 kids and it thought it was going to be chaotic, but, the kids paired off, older and younger. The older ones had the

opportunity to try to explain the skill, which is hard to do, and really tested them and improved them. And, the younger ones had the opportunity to watch a vision of their future selves. Now, a couple of those kids – I think Jonathan Schoop plays for the Orioles, there's Anderson [Andrelton] who's the shortstop for the Braves, that guy is in there, and then one other guy who's a short-stop in the big leagues. It's not a coincidence that those guys come through that league and end up succeeding because they've got the basic ingredients there. They got this windshield full of their future selves.

19:08 – JIM: You know in “The Little Book of Talent” which is a fantastic book, by the way. I love “The Talent Code” I snarfed it up, but for somebody's who's like, “Okay, I got a problem here,” “The Little Book of Talent” is just great because you just go down the table of contents and you say, “Yup, that's the one I want to read about.” It was about picking a good coach; I just want to read these five things you had in there for our audience:

1. Avoid the courteous waiter, the person who just wants to smooth things over for you;
2. Someone who scares you a little bit – you know, that reminded me...I know Kat Stevens has a new name now and I'm spacing on what it is, but he had a great song with a line, “I'm looking for a hardheaded woman, one who'll make me do my best”...I'm looking for a coach who scares me and who's going to make me do my best whether I want to or not;
3. Short, clear directions; and then
4. Love teaching fundamentals; and then
5. If you have a choice pick an older person over a younger person.

Now, I looked at those and thought, “Boy, we're Positive Coaching Alliance and there's a little edge to that. Then in “Talent Code” you talk about talent-whisperers. You say, they're quiet, reserved, older, listen more than they talk, don't do pep talks, small-targeted tips, extraordinary sensitivity to students. I loved your story about Mary Epperson the piano teacher, I believe, right? **[DAN: Right.]** Is that in Ohio, where you live?

20:52 – DAN: Actually, no; it's in Homer, Alaska, the little town. She's still around. We were there visiting her ...

20:57 – JIM: Can you describe for our listeners what she's like when a young boy or a young girl comes in for their lesson? How does she greet them?

21:08 – DAN: She's got this incredible—and, it's funny: we think of these things as kind of warm and fuzzy qualities. She's a *tiny* woman—a tiny, gray-haired woman in a little trailer park...with a trailer, rather, a trailer studio with just room enough for a piano and a desk with a little couch. The kid comes in there and she's an emotional athlete. She finds a point of connection with a child and she sits him down, they start to do some work right away. She will be very serious with them, treating them very much like an adult. But, as they progress, if they do something that's right she lights up like a Christmas tree. She makes...she's so happy when they succeed. All of these qualities

are—they are these soft, social qualities but they're the same ones that I saw in these talent-whisperers. Actually, telling this story reminds me of seeing this old coach at Spartak in Moscow – a tennis academy that's produced more top 20 women players than the whole United States. I was there when their oldest coach met their newest, youngest player, this scared 8 year old who walked through the door. This old coach noticed her and grabbed a ball and walked over to her and just said, "I'm so glad you're here." That was it. She said, "I'm so glad you're here." Then she took the ball and she said, "I want you to do something for me. I want you to catch this." She threw it and the girl caught it. The whole interaction took ten seconds, but that girl went from a scared outsider to feeling a deep connection to this person. Now there's a reason when we're all asked to think about the most important people in our lives, a huge percent of them are our coach. If you ask anybody on the street, "Who's the most important person you've ever encountered?" A huge percentage of that will be coaches. Coaches have this incredible power to change people, and to help people, and to create environments of connection and teamwork that are peak moments in people's lives. The best coaches I found were skilled in that vocabulary especially early on with the student; especially, in those first ten seconds of meeting them and especially in finding some portal of connection. The kid is scared, it's a strange environment; this is weird. Their brain is telling them to quit—to run. They're able to find a safe place and have a safe, fun interaction that is the seed for all the interactions that are to come. It's a hell of a skill and to see those people practice it and in total anonymity. For me, it was sort of like seeing Picasso painting for no money on the beach or something cause what they're doing is extremely powerful. It's extremely...no one is paying millions of dollars to do it and yet they're affecting the destiny of some of the world's greatest athletes and musicians.

24:10 – JIM: I think about people who, when I walk into the room, they light it up. I love those people. I drive home and if my wife's car is in the driveway, I start to smile and I feel like...and it seems like that's...you know if a coach can communicate that—and, like you said, it doesn't take very long: ten seconds, "Hey! Man, I'm glad you're here!" In my first book "Positive Coaching" we talked about just the importance of using names for a coach; especially if you're talking about seven, eight, nine, ten-year olds and the coach knows your name and says, "Hey, Billy! I'm so glad you're there." There is a cliché that has bugged me for years and I've finally come around to it. I'm writing a book on team culture and I'm actually thinking about building the book around this cliché. The cliché is "they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." With Mary Epperson, again, the beginning is what you describe in the book, the beginning of when the kids comes in is: there's conversation about their life – what's going on in school, blah, blah – she's interested in that person as a person not just as a person to teach piano to. That just seems like...I've been really amazed in the last two years, you see more and more football teams talking about love. "We love our teammates" and it seems to me a lot of that ignition to get kids to really want to be their best revolves around, "I feel cared for. I enjoy the people I'm with. They care about me."

25:52 – DAN: And that all makes...it's all...it's interesting to look at that through a couple different lenses. One of which is kind of the, "That's what we see in the world."

That's the same; any cohesive team is basically singing that song, "We're a family." That's what they all will say no matter what culture they're in, no matter what sport or domain they're in. If you go to Zappos Shoes or Southwest Airlines, they'll use that same language because they have the same feelings. If we look at that through the scientific lens, maybe that's the same reason. We talk about care as this, sort of, soft, fuzzy magical thing, but it's not really soft or fuzzy or magical. It's about clarity. These places are clearly communicating. They're tossing the tennis ball saying, "I'm glad you're here." That's not about being soft, that's about being clear. If we think of it in a slightly cooler light, not the warm and fuzzy Disney stuff, but just as a communications challenge to say, "How can we clearly communicate the family essence of who we are, and what we are, and what we do here every day?" -- because we know that if you don't do it all the time, people will fall out of it. It's not something you do once and then forget about, it's something that you sort of have to keep doing. You have to keep sending that signal, ringing that bell -- however you want to describe it, but it's about clarity and repetition. It's not about soft-heartedness.

27:15 – JIM: Yeah. That's brilliant. I've heard so many coaches say, gruff coaches say, "My players know I care about them" and the question is, "How?" You're giving off no signals that you care about them. That clarity just seems really, really important and, again, it doesn't have to take a long time. I wanted to talk about struggle. Carol Dweck who we mentioned, who's been a long time member of our National Advisory Board, the "growth mindset" is just a huge revelation. She says that American parents don't want their kids to struggle and you talk about, in your book, you talk about in Japan struggle is a good thing. That's where it comes back to the congenial waiter. In America, parents are often like...they want things to just be really smooth so they take obstacles out of the way whereas in Japan struggle, having a barrier that you have to struggle over is a good thing. That leads to retention.

28:18 – DAN: Right. Right. Right. You'll actually have -- there's a study that I cite in the book where they looked at classrooms in Japan and at classrooms in the US. In Japan -- teaching the same subject, the same grade -- in Japan the teacher would sort of have the kids actively struggling about 40% of the time. He would do it to the extent that he would make, he'd purposely make a mistake or put something wrong on the board so his kids would have to catch it. He was like the designer of the skateboard park, making the ramps a little bit steeper and making it harder to...getting those guys on the edges of their abilities over and over again. Whereas, they did the same study with the American professor, and it was 3%. So 40% versus 3%. Why does Japan get better math scores? Well, that's probably your answer right there. But it is a question of narrative, really. That's why Carol's work is so powerful -- it provides a new narrative for us to understand struggle. It's the same narrative that we understand, as we've talked before, when it comes to our muscles, but we've yet to really develop a vocabulary -- we're starting to, I think, develop a vocabulary and culture around sustaining and reinterpreting that struggle. It comes down to...it seems to be happening. I think you're in an interesting spot to sort of see what's happening as the language and words and the culture for these sorts of things start making their way into the commons. You know, "failing forward," you know that's a phrase you hear a lot more. Even the 10,000 hours

of practice which you can argue up and down, but, nonetheless speaks to the truth that it's not magic. It takes a lot of time, no matter who you are, to get really good. This validation of practice and of struggle...I think things are moving in the right direction when it comes to that.

30:04 – JIM: Yeah. You know, Dacher Keltner, he's also on our National Advisory Board, he's at University of California-Berkeley, the Greater Good Science Center. He told me, during one of these podcasts, about a study that kids, when their teacher pats a kid on the back, the kid is much more likely to be willing to go to the board and work on a tough problem in front of the class. Just, kind of, little bits of encouragement can just be amazing. I wanted to ask you about one of the studies you highlight in your book about two groups: one group studied this text four times, another time studied only once but was tested three times on it. That group that only studied once but was tested three times, learned 50% more than the other. That's mind-boggling to me. That seems like a really powerful insight. I was thinking about...since I read it, I've been thinking about, "Okay, what does that mean for a youth coach?" Any thoughts? How can a coach incorporate that into the way they coach?

31:14 – DAN: Yeah, it's interesting. Coaching really is about—it's funny, we don't think about it as a skill; other places do a little bit more. We don't think of it as a craft as much. If you go to Germany and you want to be a soccer coach at a high level you basically do the equivalent of attending university and you approach it from that point of view. From ours, we've got to be our own learners and I think what that studied you referred to really says, the real story of that is you have to find a way to get to the edge of your ability as a learner. And coaches are learners. Coaches should be constantly learning. If you look at any great coach – you know, John Wooden spent his off-seasons traveling around visiting programs that he admired. Chip Kelly does the same thing. Bill Belichick does the same thing. All these guys are very good at going to the edge of their ability and, as the example in the experiment shows, it's not passive. It's active. You're testing yourself over and over again. It's interesting, I'm doing a project with a professional team that I won't name, but we're doing something very interesting along these lines in the next few weeks. We're going to be taping their coaches while they coach. We're going to be doing to their coaches what they do to their athletes. You tape the athlete and they learn from the tape. Well, why wouldn't that apply to a coach? Like, how good was that coach at connecting to the room? How many good questions did that coach ask? How was that coach's body language? Was he tapping people? Was he not tapping people? How did the kids react, how did the players reach when the coach coached? Actually look at that as a skill that can be captured, give feedback on and go back and do it again on tape and see how that goes. So it's going to be a really interesting experiment, but it's going to speak to that same issue that you're raising which is, you know, if you're going to get better you cannot lean back in your chair and read something four times and hope to improve. You actually have to get out and test yourself and then a test—what is a test? It's measurement and feedback. You're measuring your ability and you're getting vivid feedback on that ability. If the world works that way, if that's how I get a better golf swing, if that's how I become a better violin player, why wouldn't it apply to becoming a better, smarter coach?

33:28 – JIM: You know, thinking about...you described testing as feed---you had two words: one was feedback. What was the first one? Test is...

33:42 – DAN: It's a --- [Jim: measuring] -- yeah, measuring it.

33:46 – JIM: That's right, yeah. Yeah. I was thinking about in our society we're so test-focused and the problem with testing as a learning tool is there are really negative consequences if you fail. Sports is like a fantastic place where you can create those kind of tests and the consequences aren't that big. They're not that terrible. So coaches can really—setting up these kind of testing situations and then using it as a teaching tool rather than, you know, who gets to be on a varsity and who doesn't. Cause I think that when a test has big consequences people...they stop, in some ways stop being learning experiences. Do you agree with that?

34:33 – DAN: Yeah, I absolutely do. Absolutely, that freezes people up. ...That really speaks to the role of coach as designer. You get to decide how things are going to go. If you're a soccer coach and you say, "You know what; the scoreboard is there with the numbers real big. Everyone knows how many goals we scored, but today we're going to keep score in how many high-quality passes we make and that's going to be what matters." Well, all of a sudden everybody is going to be – if you really set that up right and deliver the message right and deliver the culture around and score it in a way that's transparent and shared – you can really change the way your team plays because now you're sort of testing and measuring them on this different thing. On some level you are what you measure. You can tweak that environment and tip that environment towards the kind of skills you want to build instead of just the result.

35:35 – JIM: Yeah, I love that: "coach as designer." I was thinking about reading years ago when Pat Riley was coaching. We have a concept of effort goals or outcome goals, but effort goals are more under your control and if they are tied to outcome eventually you get better at it. He was frustrated with his players trying to steal the ball and getting fouls. The way—typically, the way you steal balls is on the pass and he – rather than taking it away from them on a dribble – and he started tracking how many tips, tip balls, tip passes – so, if you got your fingers on a pass playing defense you got a point whether or not it deflected enough to steal a ball or anything. All of a sudden the behavior of the team just shifted towards *really* trying to deflect the balls rather than trying to make the steal. Seems like that coach as designer is a beautiful, beautiful phrase.

36:25 – DAN: Well, if you look at how those coaches live their lives. How much time did John Wooden spend before each practice writing out the program? The idea and this takes us back, I guess, to the beginning of the conversation, of strolling up to a baseball field without any premeditation or thought and just looking out at a bunch of kids and trying to figure out what to do. That's a hell of a hard thing to do! And, actually, it helps everybody especially you the coach to spend some time figuring out, "We're going to do

A, B, C, D.” Do some of the research on sites like yours and places like yours. And figure out how to build and design a real learning community.

37:05 – JIM: This has been fantastic. I got a couple more questions for you. I’m not sure...the phrase I use for what you describe in your book is, I would call it “constricted practice” where you—you talk about futsal and how there’s many more touches, confined space and it made me think of one of my favorite books is a book by Edward Hirsch. It’s called “How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry.” He talks about Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “One Art” which is pretty famous. It starts like, “The art of losing isn’t hard to master” and he describes this poem – it’s a villanelle which is a French form of poetry, has to be 19 lines, very complex rhyming requirements: the first and third versus have to rhyme, the middle verse in each – or the middle line in each has to rhyme with itself. The poet, Elizabeth Bishop, assigned herself these restrictions. The result is a poem that is mind—it’s breathtaking it’s so beautiful. And, you might say, “Well, if you didn’t have to have all those restrictions maybe she could’ve written something even better. But, his point is those restrictions, those self-imposed restrictions cause you actually to...maybe you’re creating more mile and you’re...anyway, I just...any thought about the idea of constricted practice?”

38:39 – DAN: I think it’s brilliant. I think a lot of the science would line up right behind it. I mean the world is a really big and complicated place and whether, you know, anything you can do to kind of compress and isolate the kind of things you want to work on – to channel your thoughts and your energies in certain directions...I was just looking at this video of Novak Djokovic practicing tennis. He’s doing this little game just in the service box with his training partner and you’ve got a ...it’s sort of like a ping-pong-like game, it’s tiny. It doesn’t resemble tennis at all except you’re working on all this face control and spin and footwork. It’s just this crazy little compressed game that is – when you watch it that is kind of the same feeling you get reading that poem. It’s so beautiful and amazing and it’s creating this kind of stretching and intensity and focus that you never get in a big game. You know, you would never get it. Our brains are really big and complicated and they tend to ramble all over the place if you give them the space to roam. If you give somebody a football field and a soccer ball, not much is going to happen. You kick it, you run after it, you kick it. But if you give somebody a little tiny room and a soccer ball a lot will happen. A lot will happen. Those walls are your friends. Limiting that space, it doesn’t limit your choices it just channels them and it clarifies things. It makes you work with more intensity than you can achieve in a big open space.

40:07 – JIM: You know, Dan, I said I had two more questions; that was one. I actually have two more. I was really struck when you were talking about Florence. I never thought of Florence, Italy as this sleepy little town. It wasn’t quite as sleepy as the mythology was, but you identified the key to all the brilliant work of arts, works of art that came out of that small community and tied it to the craft guilds. Can you, again, share with our listeners what a “Craft Guild” is, I mean, and why that allowed people to become so good at what they were going?

40:50 – DAN: There's a great term called "enabling systems." They're kind of the systems right underneath the surface of everything that sort of make things possible and that's what the Craft Guild was in Florence. There were a lot of artists all over Europe, but in order to kind of protect their domains, each of the crafts, whether it was fabric making or painting or sculpting, they formed these little unions where they controlled prices, they controlled everything and also created systems of [apprentices]. They created rules. They created these little clubs, basically, where they said, "Okay, if we're going to be organized together we've got to have some rules." The [apprentices] were these young boys, they were always boys actually, who came aboard and learned every step of the craft. Learned it by imitating; learned it by doing. They didn't go to school to learn how to mix paint and how to carve marble. They went out and did it. And they learned how to take the eggs out of the coup and mix them up to make the fresco covering. They learned how to do each of these steps. This system of sort of copying and intense competition between the guilds for different projects created this brotherhood of young apprentices that grew up to be the names we all recognize. You know, the Michelangelos, and the Donatellos, and the rest. It makes you think, when you think about that and then you also kind of translate that to, "Okay, who has..." you know, ask the question who has succeeded in Hollywood over the years? Well, often it's people who had that same kind of exposure at a young age. Like a Ron Howard, he went on to become a great director. Like a George Lucas someone who was steeped in it, who was basically apprenticing. This idea that we should sort of go to school and learn theory and take tests in order to get good at these kinds of skills has proven, over the long run, to be a lot less effective than somebody hanging around the workplace. Hang around the workplace, do the work, learn the work, learn the craft of it – hands on, not through a screen, not in any kind of theory. It's the same thing you have with good people who are great at computer coding. They're out there at hackathons. They're learning how to do it. They're creating environments like Florence where they can actually have a ton of reps under pressure with real stuff for real odds.

43:17 – JIM: It makes me think of Harper Lee. She wrote "To Kill a Mockingbird" which is, might be my most favorite novel ever. I think a lot of people would say that. There's always this question like, "Why didn't she ever write another" ---well she did now--- but...I don't know that it's gotten... You can compare the two, the new book "To Catch a Watchman" or whatever the name of it is. But, there's a biography of her called "Mockingbird" that talks about the environment she was in when she wrote "To Kill a Mockingbird." She was working in a literary agency in New York City. She had lots of friends. She had a really great editor. She was getting lots of feedback on the manuscript. If we – I tend to – if we think of "Go Set a Watchman" as an earlier draft of "To Kill a Mockingbird" we see how that turned into a fantastic...with all that support, you know the term you used was "enabling system." She had an enabling support system that helped her reach her skill. It seems like a craft guild...similar and it also seems like the greatest teams where people are supporting each other. I was really pleased with the whole thing about craft guilds and your point that guild – I don't know if that's Italian or what, French – guild stands for gold. You get in a good team it is like being golden.

44:50 – DAN: That’s beautiful. It’s true. It’s so funny because the story we’re fed about talent from movies and Nike and everything else is that it’s kind of this magical thing that you get alone, but as you so beautifully described it’s something that’s built in community. It’s something that we build together and whenever you have a talented person you can draw this broader circle of support around them which means that, you know, I think for your listeners, it’s sort of about the question of how...figuring out how that works; how to connect to people; how to learn; how to share; how to create these communities cause talent is not something you sort of get alone. You build together.

45:31 – JIM: Yeah. Okay, this is my last question. I’m really struck by your term “ignition.” It’s motivation: how do people get really turned on? You had a phrase there that...I know, it was about the South Korean golfers. The first one makes a big...and other people say, “If she can do it, why can’t I?” I was reminded reading about when Jimmy Carter decided to run for president. He was the governor of Georgia and as the governor he would host all these candidates – democratic candidates running for president. The story is one day at dinner after hosting a candidate he turned to Rosalyn and said, “If that guy can run for President, why can’t I?” The phrase you use in the book is “That’s who I want to be” and we have – we’ve built our program, Positive Coaching Alliance around what Peter Senge at MIT calls Mental Models. The Double-Goal Coach, the Better Athletes, Better People - -“Yeah, I want to win on the scoreboard, but I also want to teach life lessons.” And the Triple-Impact Competitor who makes himself better, her teammates better, and the game better. And, what we’re really trying to do is ignite people to say – athletes to say, “I know what a Triple-Impact Competitor is and *that’s* one and I want to be one.” And coaches to say, “I want to be— that’s what I want to be: a Double-Goal Coach.” Just curious, any advice for how we can help those models, the Double-Goal Coach, the Triple-Impact Competitor ignite around the country?

47:16 – DAN: Yeah, there are moments that I think are really interesting. They’re sort of doorways into having that conversation. I’m thinking of the – what was it – the softball player that hit the homerun and then hurt her knee...got carried around the bases by the rival team. [JIM: Mallory Holtman. She is on our National Advisory Board and we call that “The Mallory Moment.”] I mean you know, in that...seeking those moments and highlighting them and using them as a lens to look at them. We sort of learn through people and through stories, and through narratives. The more you can uncover and fortunately we’re living in this age where it’s more possible than ever. If something cool like that happens in the field it will be filmed. You will have access to it to share it and to celebrate it. And so finding these moments and finding a way to really sell the humanity of it *over* the model and the model is baked into it and the model is part of it. But, really putting the story first. It’s the story...that’s the way we learn. That’s what you want to put in the windshield and then let people dig deeper and find out more and connect those dots.

48:32 – JIM: Wow. Fantastic advice. Dan, this is...we could go on – I know I could – for hours and hours. This has been fantastic and I really appreciate the work you’ve done is

invaluable and I really appreciate your support of the Positive Coaching Alliance Movement.

48:47 – DAN: Thank you. It's an honor and it's really been fun talking to you, too, Jim. I know it will not be the last time.